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# $\mathcal{N} = 2$ Supersymmetric QCD and Integrable Spin Chains: Rational Case $N_f < 2N_c$

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## Abstract

The form of the spectral curve for  $4d$   $\mathcal{N} = 2$  supersymmetric Yang-Mills theory with matter fields in the fundamental representation of the gauge group suggests that its  $1d$  integrable counterpart should be looked for among (inhomogeneous)  $sl(2)$  spin chains with the length of the chain being equal to the number of colours  $N_c$ . For  $N_f < 2N_c$  the relevant spin chain is the simplest  $XXX$ -model, and this identification is in agreement with the known results in Seiberg-Witten theory.

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# 1 Introduction

Exact form of the abelian low-energy effective actions and BPS massive spectra for the  $4d \mathcal{N} = 2$  SUSY Yang-Mills (SYM) theories [1]-[5] possess a concise description in terms of  $1d$  integrable systems [6]. The *reasons* for this identity remain somewhat obscure, but *the fact* itself is already well established [7]-[11]. To be precise, the relation between the Seiberg-Witten solutions (SW) and integrable theories was so far described in full detail only for particular family of models: the  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  SYM theory with one ( $N_a = 1$ ) “matter”  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  hypermultiplet in the adjoint representation of the gauge group  $G$  – which is known to be related to the Calogero-Moser family of integrable systems [8, 9]. When the hypermultiplet decouples (its mass becomes infinite), the dimensional transmutation takes place and the pure gauge  $4d \mathcal{N} = 2$  SYM theory gets associated with the Toda-chain model. A physically more interesting family of models – the  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  supersymmetric QCD (SQCD) with  $N_f$  matter  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  hypermultiplets in *the fundamental* representation of  $G$  – does not have a well established integrable counterpart yet. It is known only [10],[11] that the  $N_c = 3$ ,  $N_f = 2$  curve can be associated with the Goryachev-Chaplygin top. The purpose of this letter is to fill, at least partly, this gap. Our suggestion is to associate the family of  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  SQCD models with the well-known family of integrable systems – (inhomogeneous  $sl(2)$ ) spin chains, of which the Toda chain (pure gauge model) is again a limiting case. The crucial motivation for *such* a suggestion [10] is the peculiar form of the spectral equations, derived in [2], [4]. In this letter we just describe the idea, illustrating it by the simplest example of the rational  $XXX$  spin chain, which is, however, enough for the complete description of the  $N_f < 2N_c$  case. The detailed arguments and analysis of the most interesting elliptic case of  $N_f = 2N_c$  are postponed to a separate paper.

The SW problem is described by the following set of data (see [9] for details). Let us assume that the YM theory is *softly* regularized both in the UV and IR regions – this is always possible in the  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  SUSY framework. In the UV region, the theory is embedded – by addition of appropriate massive matter  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  hypermultiplets – into an UV-*finite* model. At ultra-high energies, this *non-abelian* theory has vanishing  $\beta$ -function, i.e. is conformally-invariant, and possesses a single coupling constant  $\tau = \frac{4\pi i}{e^2} + \frac{\theta}{2\pi}$ . At the energies below the masses  $m_\alpha$  of the additional matter hypermultiplets, the original  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  SUSY theory is reproduced, which is thus labeled by the set of data  $\{G, \tau, m_\alpha\}$ .

In the IR region, the theory can avoid entering the strong-coupling regime, if the scalar components of the gauge supermultiplet develop non-zero vacuum expectation values along the valleys of the superpotential. These v.e.v.’s  $\langle \Phi \rangle$  are given by diagonal matrices and can be fully described by the set of “moduli”  $h_k = \frac{1}{k} \langle \text{Tr} \Phi^k \rangle$ . At energies below this IR “soft cutoff”, the theory becomes  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  SUSY *abelian* model, with the *set* of coupling constants  $T_{ij}$ .  $T_{ij}$  is actually expressed in terms of “periods”  $a^i$ ,  $a_i^D = \frac{\partial \mathcal{F}}{\partial a^i}$ :  $T_{ij} = \frac{\partial^2 \mathcal{F}}{\partial a^i \partial a^j} = \frac{\partial a_i^D}{\partial a^j}$ .

The SW problem can be formally defined as a map

$$G, \tau, m_\alpha, h_i \rightarrow T_{ij}, a^i, a_i^D \quad (1)$$

and the solution to this problem has an elegant description in the following terms [1, 2]: one associates with the data  $G, \tau, m_\alpha$  a family of  $2d$  surfaces (complex curves)  $\mathcal{C}$  with  $h_i$  parameterizing (some) moduli of their complex structures, and a meromorphic 1-form  $dS$  on every  $\mathcal{C}$ . Then  $a^i = \oint_{A_i} dS$ ,  $a_i^D = \oint_{B^i} dS$ . In terms of integrability theory the curves  $\mathcal{C}$  are interpreted [6] as the spectral curves of certain integrable systems, and  $a^i$ ,

$a_i^D$  are related to the action integrals ( $\oint pdq$ ) of the system. Thus, to describe the solution to the SW problem one should present the explicit map

$$G, \tau, m_\alpha \rightarrow (\mathcal{C}, dS) \{h_i\}, \quad (2)$$

and this turns out to be equivalent to selection of particular integrable system. The bare charge  $\tau$  disappears from the formulas in the asymptotically free region  $N_f < 2N_c$ , where dynamical transmutation substitutes  $\tau$  by  $\Lambda_{QCD}^{(N_f)} \sim \exp \frac{2\pi i \tau}{2N_c - N_f}$ . In what follows we put  $\Lambda_{QCD}^{(N_f)} = 1$ .

## 2 From Toda to Spin Chains

Our starting point is that the Toda chain spectral curves, corresponding to the pure gauge ( $N_f = 0$ )  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  SUSY theory [6], can be described in terms of two *different* characteristic equations. The first one,

$$\det_{N_c \times N_c} (\mathcal{L}^{\text{TC}}(w) - \lambda) = 0, \quad (3)$$

with  $N_c \times N_c$  matrix  $\mathcal{L}^{\text{TC}}(w)$  being the Lax operator of the periodic Toda chain, can be obtained from a degeneration of the elliptic Calogero-Moser particle system, and this fact is crucially used in description of models with adjoint matter hypermultiplet.

Equation (3) reads

$$w + \frac{1}{w} = 2P_{N_c}(\lambda), \quad (4)$$

due to the very particular form of the matrix  $\mathcal{L}^{\text{TC}}(w)$  (not preserved by its Calogero-Moser generalization). Here  $P_{N_c}(\lambda)$  is a polynomial of degree  $N_c$ , whose coefficients are the Schur polynomials of the Toda chain Hamiltonians  $h_k = \sum_{i=1}^{N_c} p_i^k + \dots$ :

$$\begin{aligned} P_{N_c}(\lambda) &= \sum_{k=0}^{N_c} \mathcal{S}_{N_c-k}(h) \lambda^{N_c} = \\ &= \left( \lambda^{N_c} + h_1 \lambda^{N_c-1} + \frac{1}{2} (h_2 - h_1^2) \lambda^{N_c-2} + \dots \right). \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

Since (4) is quadratic equation with respect to  $w$ , one can rewrite it as another characteristic equation involving only  $2 \times 2$  matrices

$$\det_{2 \times 2} (T_{N_c}(\lambda) - w) = w^2 - w \text{Tr } T_{N_c}(\lambda) + \det T_{N_c}(\lambda) = 0. \quad (6)$$

In the Toda-chain case, the  $2 \times 2$  matrix  $T_{N_c}(\lambda)$  is such that  $\text{Tr } T_{N_c}^{\text{TC}}(\lambda) = P_{N_c}(\lambda)$  and  $\det T_{N_c}^{\text{TC}}(\lambda) = 1$ . According to [2], [4], the spectral curves for the  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  SQCD with any  $N_f < 2N_c$  have the same form (6) with

$$\text{Tr } T_{N_c}(\lambda) = P_{N_c}(\lambda) + R_{N_c-1}(\lambda), \quad \det T_{N_c}(\lambda) = Q_{N_f}(\lambda), \quad (7)$$

and  $Q_{N_f}(\lambda)$  and  $R_{N_c-1}(\lambda)$  are certain  *$h$ -independent* polynomials of  $\lambda$ .

To go further, let us remind the origin of representation (6) for the Toda-chain theory. The  $N_c \times N_c$  Lax equation  $\mathcal{L}_{ij} \psi_j = \lambda \psi_i$  can be rewritten through  $2 \times 2$  matrices [12]:

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{\psi}_{i+1} &= L_i^{\text{TC}}(\lambda) \tilde{\psi}_i, \\ \tilde{\psi}_i &= \begin{pmatrix} \psi_i \\ \chi_i \end{pmatrix}, \quad L_i^{\text{TC}}(\lambda) = \begin{pmatrix} p_i + \lambda & e^{q_i} \\ -e^{-q_i} & 0 \end{pmatrix}, \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

i.e.  $\chi_{i+1} = -e^{-q_i}\psi_i$ . Eq.(6) is expressed through the monodromy matrix,

$$T_{N_c}^{\text{TC}}(\lambda) = \prod_{i=N_c}^1 L_i^{\text{TC}}(\lambda), \quad \text{hboxthus} \quad T_{N_c}(\lambda)\tilde{\psi}_i = \tilde{\psi}_{i+N_c} \quad (9)$$

with  $\det_{2 \times 2} T_{N_c}^{\text{TC}}(\lambda) = \prod_{i=1}^{N_c} \det_{2 \times 2} L_i^{\text{TC}}(\lambda - \lambda_i) = 1$  and  $\text{Tr } T_{N_c}^{\text{TC}}(\lambda) = P_{N_c}(\lambda)$ . Eq.(6) can be understood as a corollary of the boundary condition  $\tilde{\psi}_{i+N_c} = w\tilde{\psi}_i$ . Substitution of (9) into (6) gives rise to the Toda-chain spectral curve (4). Together with the formula for the 1-form  $dS = \lambda \frac{dw}{w}$  this provides the solution to the SW problem for pure gauge ( $N_f = 0$ ) theory.

Thus, we reproduce the spectral curve (4) and the 1-form  $dS$  of the periodic Toda-chain system from the different perspective – taking a closed chain (of length =  $N_c$ ) of  $2 \times 2$  Lax matrices and computing the eigenvalues of the monodromy operator. The two descriptions, (3) and (6), are identically equivalent for the Toda chain, but their *deformations* are very different: the “chain” representation (6), (9) is naturally embedded into the family of  $XYZ$  spin chains [12, 13], while the  $N_c \times N_c$  Lax operator representation – into that of Calogero-Moser models and generic Hitchin systems [14]. Our suggestion is to associate these two different deformations of the integrable Toda chain system with the two different deformations of the pure  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  SYM theory: by addition of massive matter multiplets in the *fundamental* and *adjoint* representations of the gauge group  $G = SU(N_c)$  respectively. Self-consistency of the 4d theory in the UV region requires that  $N_f \leq 2N_c$  and  $N_a \leq 1$ , thus the numbers of deformation parameters (masses  $m_a$ ) in the two cases are  $2N_c$  and 1. Since adjoint model is exhaustively analyzed in [8, 9], in what follows we concentrate on the fundamental case.

Integrability of the Toda chain in representation (8) follows from *quadratic* r-matrix relations [13]

$$\{L(\lambda) \otimes L(\lambda')\} = [r(\lambda - \lambda'), L(\lambda) \otimes L(\lambda')], \quad (10)$$

so that  $\{p_i, q_j\} = \delta_{ij}$  follows from (10) with the rational  $r$ -matrix (see (18) below). The crucial property of this relation is that it is multiplicative and any product like (9) satisfies the same relation

$$\{T_{N_c}(\lambda) \otimes T_{N_c}(\lambda')\} = [r(\lambda - \lambda'), T_{N_c}(\lambda) \otimes T_{N_c}(\lambda')], \quad (11)$$

provided all  $L_i$  in product (9) are independent,  $\{L_i, L_j\} = 0$  for  $i \neq j$ .

Our proposal is to look at non-Hitchin generalizations of the Toda chain, i.e. deform eqs.(6)-(9) preserving the quadraticity of Poisson brackets (11) and, thus, the possibility to build a monodromy matrix  $T(\lambda)$  by multiplication of  $L_i(\lambda)$ 's. For a moment, we even allow  $L(\lambda)$  to be  $n \times n$ , not obligatory  $2 \times 2$  matrices.

The full spectral curve for the periodic *inhomogeneous* spin chain is given by:

$$\det_{n \times n} (T_{N_c}(\lambda) - w) = 0, \quad (12)$$

with the inhomogeneous  $T$ -matrix

$$T_{N_c}(\lambda) = \prod_{i=N_c}^1 L_i(\lambda - \lambda_i) \quad (13)$$

still satisfying (11), and  $d^{-1}$ (symplectic form) is now

$$dS = \lambda \frac{d\tilde{w}}{\tilde{w}}, \quad (14)$$

$$\tilde{w} = w \cdot (\det T_{N_c})^{-1/n}.$$

In the particular case of  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  ( $sl(2)$  spin chains), the spectral equation acquires the form (6) (in general the spectral equation is of the  $n$ -th order in  $w$ ):

$$w + \frac{\det_{2 \times 2} T_{N_c}(\lambda)}{w} = \text{Tr}_{2 \times 2} T_{N_c}(\lambda), \quad (15)$$

or

$$\tilde{w} + \frac{1}{\tilde{w}} = \frac{\text{Tr}_{2 \times 2} T_{N_c}(\lambda)}{\sqrt{\det_{2 \times 2} T_{N_c}(\lambda)}}. \quad (16)$$

The r.h.s. of this equation contains the dynamical variables of the spin system only in the special combinations – its Hamiltonians (which are all in involution, i.e. Poisson-commuting). It is this peculiar shape (quadratic  $w$ -dependence) that suggests the identification of the periodic  $sl(2)$  spin chains with solutions to the SW problem with the fundamental matter supermultiplets.

### 3 XXX Spin Chain and the Low Energy SYM with $N_f < 2N_c$

The  $2 \times 2$  Lax matrix for the  $sl(2)$  XXX chain is

$$L(\lambda) = \lambda \cdot \mathbf{1} + \sum_{a=1}^3 S_a \cdot \sigma^a. \quad (17)$$

The Poisson brackets of the dynamical variables  $S_a$ ,  $a = 1, 2, 3$  (taking values in the algebra of functions) are implied by (10) with the rational  $r$ -matrix

$$r(\lambda) = \frac{1}{\lambda} \sum_{a=1}^3 \sigma^a \otimes \sigma^a. \quad (18)$$

In the  $sl(2)$  case, they are just

$$\{S_a, S_b\} = i\epsilon_{abc} S_c, \quad (19)$$

i.e.  $\{S_a\}$  plays the role of angular momentum (“classical spin”) giving the name “spin-chains” to the whole class of systems. Algebra (19) has an obvious Casimir operator (an invariant, which Poisson commutes with all the generators  $S_a$ ),

$$K^2 = \mathbf{S}^2 = \sum_{a=1}^3 S_a S_a, \quad (20)$$

so that

$$\begin{aligned} \det_{2 \times 2} L(\lambda) &= \lambda^2 - K^2, \\ \det_{2 \times 2} T_{N_c}(\lambda) &= \prod_{i=N_c}^1 \det_{2 \times 2} L_i(\lambda - \lambda_i) = \prod_{i=N_c}^1 ((\lambda - \lambda_i)^2 - K_i^2) = \\ &= \prod_{i=N_c}^1 (\lambda + m_i^+)(\lambda + m_i^-) = Q_{2N_c}(\lambda), \end{aligned} \quad (21)$$

where we assumed that the values of spin  $K$  can be different at different nodes of the chain, and <sup>1</sup>

$$m_i^\pm = -\lambda_i \mp K_i. \quad (22)$$

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<sup>1</sup> Eq.(22) implies that the limit of vanishing masses, all  $m_i^\pm = 0$ , is associated with the *homogeneous* chain (all  $\lambda_i = 0$ ) and vanishing spins at each site (all  $K_i = 0$ ). It deserves noting that a similar situation was considered by L.Lipatov [15] in the study of the *high-energy* limit of the ordinary (non-supersymmetric) QCD. The spectral equation is then the classical limit of the Baxter equation from [16].

While the determinant of monodromy matrix (21) depends on dynamical variables only through Casimirs  $K_i$  of the Poisson algebra, the dependence of the trace  $\mathcal{T}_{N_c}(\lambda) = \frac{1}{2}\text{Tr}_{2 \times 2} T_{N_c}(\lambda)$  is less trivial. Still, as usual for integrable systems, it depends on  $S_a^{(i)}$  only through Hamiltonians of the spin chain (which are not Casimirs but Poisson-commute with *each other*).

In order to get some impression how the Hamiltonians look like, we present explicit examples of monodromy matrices for  $N_c = 2$  and 3. Hamiltonians depend non-trivially on the  $\lambda_i$ -parameters (inhomogeneities of the chain) and the coefficients in the spectral equation (12) depend only on the Hamiltonians and symmetric functions of the  $m$ -parameters (22), i.e. the dependence of  $\{\lambda_i\}$  and  $\{K_i\}$  is rather special. This property is crucial for identification of the  $m$ -parameters with the masses of the matter supermultiplets in the  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  SQCD.

**$N_c = 2$**

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{T}_2(\lambda) &= (\lambda - \lambda_1)(\lambda - \lambda_2) - \sum_{a=1}^3 S_a^{(1)} S_a^{(2)} = \\ &= \lambda^2 - (\lambda_1 + \lambda_2)\lambda + \left( h_2 + \lambda_1 \lambda_2 - \frac{1}{2}(K_1^2 + K_2^2) - \frac{1}{2}(\lambda_1^2 + \lambda_2^2) \right). \end{aligned} \quad (23)$$

The second Hamiltonian is

$$\begin{aligned} h_2\{\lambda_i\} &= - \sum_{a=1}^3 \sum_{i < j}^{N_c} S_a^{(i)} S_a^{(j)} - \frac{1}{4} t_1(K^2) - \frac{1}{4} t_1(\lambda^2) = \\ &= \overset{N_c=2}{=} - \sum_{a=1}^3 S_a^{(1)} S_a^{(2)} - \frac{1}{4}(K_1^2 + K_2^2) - \frac{1}{4}(\lambda_1^2 + \lambda_2^2). \end{aligned} \quad (24)$$

The coefficient of the  $\lambda^1$ -term at the r.h.s. of (23) can be expressed through the parameters  $m^\pm$ , defined by (22):

$$-(\lambda_1 + \lambda_2) = \frac{1}{2}(m_1^+ + m_1^- + m_2^+ + m_2^-) = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{\gamma=1}^{2N_c} m_\gamma = \frac{1}{2} t_1\{m\}. \quad (25)$$

where we introduced an obvious notation  $\{m_\gamma\}$  for the whole set of parameters  $\{m_i^\pm\}$ , and the symmetric functions are defined as

$$t_k\{m\} = \sum_{\gamma_1 < \dots < \gamma_k} m_{\gamma_1} \dots m_{\gamma_k} \quad (26)$$

for any sets of variables.

The last ( $\lambda^0$ ) term at the r.h.s. of (23) can be represented as

$$\begin{aligned} h_2 + \lambda_1 \lambda_2 + \frac{1}{4}(K_1^2 + K_2^2) + \frac{1}{4}(\lambda_1^2 + \lambda_2^2) &= \\ = h_2 + t_2(\lambda) + \frac{1}{4} t_1(K^2) + \frac{1}{4} t_1(\lambda^2) &= h_2\{\lambda_i\} + \frac{1}{4} t_2\{m\}. \end{aligned} \quad (27)$$

Indeed,

$$\begin{aligned} t_2\{m\} &= \frac{1}{2} \left( \left( \sum_{\gamma=1}^{2N_c} m_\gamma \right)^2 - \sum_{\gamma=1}^{2N_c} m_\gamma^2 \right) = \\ &= \frac{1}{2} \left( \left( 2 \sum_{i=1}^{N_c} \lambda_i \right)^2 - 2 \sum_{i=1}^{N_c} (\lambda_i^2 - K_i^2) \right) = 4t_2(\lambda) + t_1(\lambda^2) + t_1(K^2). \end{aligned} \quad (28)$$

$N_c = 3$

In this case:

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathcal{T}_3(\lambda) &= \lambda^3 - (\lambda_1 + \lambda_2 + \lambda_3)\lambda^2 + \\
&+ \left( \lambda_1\lambda_2 + \lambda_2\lambda_3 + \lambda_3\lambda_1 - \sum_{a=1}^3 (S_a^{(1)}S_a^{(2)} + S_a^{(2)}S_a^{(3)} + S_a^{(3)}S_a^{(1)}) \right) \lambda + \\
&+ i\epsilon_{abc}S_a^{(1)}S_b^{(2)}S_c^{(3)} = \\
&= \lambda^3 + \frac{1}{2}t_1\{m\}\lambda^2 + (h_2 + \frac{1}{4}t_2\{m\})\lambda + (h_3 + \frac{1}{8}t_3\{m\}),
\end{aligned} \tag{29}$$

where  $h_2\{\lambda_i\}$  has been already defined in (24) and

$$\begin{aligned}
h_3\{\lambda_i\} &= i\epsilon_{abc} \sum_{i < j < k}^{N_c} S_a^{(i)}S_b^{(j)}S_c^{(k)} + \sum_i \sum_{\substack{j, k \neq i \\ j < k}} \lambda_i S_a^{(j)}S_a^{(k)} + \\
&+ \frac{1}{4} \left( [t_1(\lambda^2) + t_1(K^2)] t_1(\lambda) - t_1(\lambda^3) - t_1(\lambda K^2) \right),
\end{aligned} \tag{30}$$

while

$$\begin{aligned}
t_3\{m\} &= \frac{1}{6} \left( \left( \sum m \right)^3 - 3 \left( \sum m^2 \right) \left( \sum m \right) + 2 \sum m^3 \right) = \\
&= -8t_3(\lambda) - 2t_1(\lambda^2)t_1(\lambda) - 2t_1(K^2)t_1(\lambda) + 2t_1(\lambda^3) + 2t_1(\lambda K^2).
\end{aligned} \tag{31}$$

Similarly one can deduce that

$$\mathcal{T}_{N_c}(\lambda) = \frac{1}{2} \text{Tr}_{2 \times 2} T_{N_c}(\lambda) = P_{N_c}(\lambda|h) + \sum \lambda^{N_f - N_c - i} t_i\{m\} = P_{N_c}(\lambda|h) + R_{N_c-1}(\lambda|m). \tag{32}$$

Together with (14)-(16) and (21), this reproduces the formulas proposed in [4].

Thus, we demonstrated that the SW problem for the  $\mathcal{N} = 2$  SUSY QCD with  $N_f < 2N_c$  is solved in terms of integrable  $XXX$  spin chain. This construction has a natural elliptic generalization, which describes the conformal point  $N_f = 2N_c$ . The details will be presented elsewhere.

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